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12:56 p.m. EST

MR. ERELI: Hello, everybody. We can go straight to your questions today. I don't have any statements.

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QUESTION: Do you have any information on Masri? There seems to be a bit of a discrepancy between whether the Secretary acknowledged making a mistake over his detention and --

MR. ERELI: Who? Who?

QUESTION: Masri. Al-Masri. And also -- because Merkel said in her news conference -- Chancellor Merkel said that the U.S. had acknowledged making a mistake over this particular case. But I understand that on the flight to Bucharest, U.S. officials have said that, indeed, that was not the case and that the U.S. did not acknowledge it. So there seems to be a bit of a discrepancy between the two versions.

MR. ERELI: Well, you have sort of -- and it's difficult because you're asking me to give real-time commentary on events that I'm not in.

QUESTION: Then, I'll be straightforward. Did the U.S. make a mistake?

MR. ERELI: I think the Secretary was very clear in her public remarks and I will echo those remarks. Number one, we're not going to comment publicly about specific cases. And number two, if and when mistakes are made in the lawful practice of renditions, we will take every effort and every step possible to rectify them and ensure that they don't happen again.

QUESTION: Also, Mr. Al-Masri was denied entry to the United States on Saturday. Do you have any details as to why? Was he on the no-fly note? This is probably a Homeland Security issue but do you have any details on that? Have you provided any more information to that?

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MR. ERELI: I don't have any information about that.

QUESTION: If I could just follow up. Why do you not comment on a case if it is indeed a mistake and this man is innocent and something has happened to him that's been untoward? Why do you not acknowledge that?

MR. ERELI: This gets to the whole -- and this is part and parcel of the whole issue about what we do and how we do it. And that is not something we're going to comment public about, beyond -- it's talking about individual cases and specific actions, beyond saying that what -- when we act, we do so lawfully, in accordance with our laws and international laws. And as again, the Secretary said, no system is perfect, no legal -- no system's perfect. And if and when mistakes are made, we will take actions to rectify them. But again, it's a principle and I think a reasonable one not to talk publicly about specific cases.

QUESTION: Do you plan on issuing an apology to --

MR. ERELI: You know, this is not a case that I have the details on and that I'm in a position to provide you information about.

QUESTION: Well, without getting into details about the specific case, can you say whether the Secretary did discuss a case with the German Chancellor and what she is disappointed that the Chancellor raised it? I mean, did she make comments to the Chancellor that that the Chancellor like really shouldn't have made public?

MR. ERELI: Well, I was not in the meeting so I'm not able to speak to the specifics about what was said or not said in the meeting. It is my understanding that the Secretary made privately the same points that she made publicly, which is that we work in partnership with our friends, including Germany, to confront a common threat. And we do so mindful and respectful of our international -- of international law, of U.S. laws, of the sovereignty of our partners and that was the message.

QUESTION: Well, it must -- I mean, that's a far cry from the United States admitted that they made a mistake in this particular case. So I mean, without telling us-- I understand that you don't want to talk with us about specifics of the case, but can you say whether she spoke to the German Chancellor about the case and the Chancellor, you know, kind of made her private --

MR. ERELI: Well, again I would --

QUESTION: -- to make her private comments public.

MR. ERELI: I'd refer you to the public remarks of the Secretary where she said that she did say to the Chancellor that when and if mistakes are made they'll be rectified.

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QUESTION: Why didn't Secretary Rice correct the Chancellor in the press conference if Merkel misspoke? Why did they wait until afterwards to do that?

MR. ERELI: I don't know if I'd agree with that assessment about the remarks that were made. I mean --

QUESTION: The Chancellor did not misspeak?

MR. ERELI: I can't -- look, I'm not going to interpret for you the Chancellor's remark. I will speak for you about what U.S. policy is, what the message of the Secretary of State is and that, frankly, the meeting was cordial and I think agreement and understanding on the points that both were making.

QUESTION: Well, Adam, is it correct to say then, as Chancellor Merkel did, that the United States accepts that the Al-Masri case was a mistake.

MR. ERELI: I didn't see that she said that.

QUESTION: "I'm pleased to say we spoke about the individual case which was accepted by the United States as a mistake."

MR. ERELI: I think I've characterized for you what the view of the United States is and what the Secretary said.

QUESTION: No, you haven't.

QUESTION: Can I just follow up here? Adam, I'm sorry. What we're looking for is to connect the dot here is are you denying what the Chancellor said, which is that she said Secretary Rice spoke to her, acknowledged that it was mistake. Are you denying that that happened?

MR. ERELI: What I'm saying is not being in the conversation, I can't speak to what this Chancellor said. What I can tell you is the American position is that without speaking to the specifics of any particular case, any individual case, we do make the point and we did make the point that if and when mistakes are made, they will be rectified.

QUESTION: Can I ask you about something else or --

QUESTION: No --

QUESTION: This is productive.

QUESTION: Everybody knows this was a mistake and yet you are not prepared to accept that it was a mistake or to apologize for it. I mean, does this get to the heart of the way you conduct foreign policy, that if you can't -- if you do make a mistake, why couldn't you just simply accept it?

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MR. ERELI: I don't think there's any -- I think the United States has made a couple points which are important and which underscore, number one, our respect for our partners and respect for their sovereignty; number two, our respect for our own legal obligations and international law; and number three, our recognition that this is the war on terror and the actions that we and our partners in the war on terror take to prevent our enemies from killing our citizens, that those actions are -- taking action on those issues presents very difficult challenges in a new -- in the new environment in which we face; and that we are working diligently to take action that protects our citizens, that is consistent with our law, that is responsive and is effective and is legal and is done in partnership with others. We have been very clear that meeting all those standards is a challenge and does require us to adapt, and I think that by and large there's a recognition and -- a recognition and an understanding of that.

So I guess I'd answer your question that way.

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